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## CIA Costs and Credibility

STANFIELD TURNER, the new director of the Central Intelligence Agency, was right when he said that one of his tasks is to rebuild American credibility in the country's intelligence community.

Restoring that credibility is an essential goal, but it must be accomplished without damaging the ability of the CIA and other intelligence agencies to perform their basic functions.

To that end, President Carter has now taken the justifiable position that the overall figure on the cost of operating the intelligence apparatus can be made public.

Admiral Turner has made it clear to a Senate intelligence subcommittee that the administration would oppose any effort to make public an item-by-item breakdown. Such a breakdown might give away too much information to our potential adversaries.

However, there is little the Russians or anyone else could gain by knowing the total amount of money the government spends each year on intelligence. The Soviets probably already have a pretty good idea of what the figure is, just as we undoubtedly know the approximate cost of the Russian intelligence network.

As Admiral Turner said, "We are a free and open society," and it is "appropriate that our citizens be kept as well informed as possible about the activities of their government."

The president does not believe that revealing the cost of intelligence will be damaging to our interests. His proposal therefore is a legitimate step, which, taken in the context of the broader efforts to prevent future abuses within the intelligence system, can help reassure the country about its ability to control some of its most important agencies of government.